

The final outcome of community diagnosis and its products should:

- Provide justification for budget improvement requests submitted to the State Legislature;
- Provide to state-level programs and their regional office personnel information that fosters better planning, promotion, and coordination of prevention and intervention strategies at the local level;
- Serve health planning and advocacy needs at the community level. Here, the community leaders and local health departments provide the leadership to ensure that documented community health problems are addressed.

The end result of the process will be a set of prioritized health goals and proposed interventions to address the needs of the community. The Tennessee Department of Health is committed to assisting communities throughout our state in finding the answers to these questions via the community diagnosis process. This document will explain the community diagnosis process and outcomes for Van Buren County. We will also provide a historical perspective with details of the council and its formation.

## History

“Public health is what we, as a society, do collectively to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy.”

The Future of Public Health  
Institute of Medicine, 1988

This manual is designed to assist local communities, local and regional health departments, and the state department of health in fulfilling the mission of public health, as defined above. If we, as a society, are to improve the conditions that affect the health of all of us, we must begin in local communities, dealing with local conditions. Health care is a very localized phenomenon. The needs and problems of one community may be very different from other communities, even those in close geographical proximity. Community leaders together with local health departments have a responsibility to play key roles in this effort. They should lead their communities in an examination of local health problems and in the development of plans to overcome those problems.

This mission can be accomplished by implementing the three core functions of public health at all levels of government. They are:

**Assessment:** The assessment function involves the monitoring and surveillance of local problems, the assessment of needs, and the identification of resources for dealing with them.

**Policy Development:** Policy development goes hand in hand with leadership, which fosters local involvement and a sense of ownership of these policies. It should emphasize local